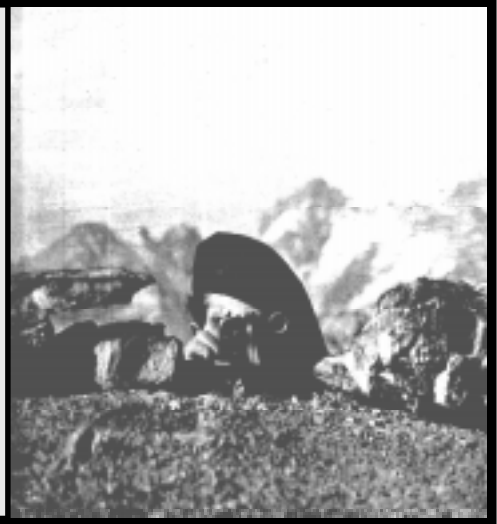


VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

Number 3

Jul 95



PREP FIRE

Hello and welcome to the third issue of *View From The Trenches*. For those of you who are getting this 'zine for the first time, *View From The Trenches* aims to give us British ASL players a chance to talk to each other about the game, so I expect to be hearing from you.

Some of you have already begun to respond. Nothing special, but it's an encouraging start. From the letters I've been getting, my impression of the average ASL player (at least in this country) is that he (I've not heard of any she's) is 25-35 and has been gaming for a number of years. The majority of ASL product is owned, even though everyone seems to consider themselves a beginner as far as ASL is concerned, with few having gone past Chapters A-D. Lack of opponents and lack of time seem to be the two main causes of the lack of playing experience for most people. Hopefully the effects of the former will be reduced soon with the arrival of the solitaire system, although however you play ASL it still requires a major commitment in time and effort.

Humble pie time. After my criticizing of Avalon Hill last time, it looks like ASL's future isn't so bleak after all. More HASL modules, new mapboards, even a solitaire system. No news on the minors though, but I

guess they'll see daylight one day.

View From The Trenches is produced on a 486SX-25 PC using PageMaker V5.0 and printed out on a 24 pin dot matrix printer before being photocopied. I don't have any training in the use of DTP or graphic design, just a healthy dose of enthusiasm, and work on a "does it look OK" principle. From what some of you have been saying, I seem to be doing something right.

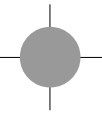
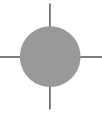
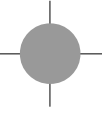
I took advantage of getting a job at the end of June to purchase a modem and got connected to CompuServe, allowing me to get on-line. Although I've yet to check out the Internet, there does appear to be quite a large amount of on-line ASL activity, including a number of Play By Electronic Mail (PBEM) games of various ASL scenarios. Hopefully I'll be able to bring a full report of ASL on-line in the next issue.

So until next time, roll low and prosper.

Pete Phillipps

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ASL ANNUAL '95 (WINTER)

Over-sized, over-priced, and over here. Yes, at long bleeding last, the new ASL annual is here. Over-sized? Yes, its 96 pages and has a wraparound card cover with 9 Deluxe ASL overlays. Over-priced? Well, yes, but the two '93 annuals each cost £7.95 for 48 pages, so in that respect £17.95 doesn't seem so bad.

And, at the end of the day, its the contents that determine whether its really worth it. So, what's inside? Well, a brief flick through reveals an article on Japanese airborne forces, a campaign game leader system, a look at the Normandy campaign, a discussion on routing, and finally a Series Replay of Festung St Edouard. Plus some 24 scenarios covering everything from the Spanish Civil War to a Soviet clash with Ukrainian nationalists in 1946.

Production wise, the annual is a joy to behold. Anyone who's seen recent issues of *The General* will be familiar with the improvements made by Avalon Hill recently. Extensive use is made of colour for maps, article sub-headings, and sidebars/tables. We are also treated to numerous photographs. The centre pages also feature a consolidated listing of all ASL errata and Q&A issued in previous annuals and issues of *The General*.

Anyone who has read Steven C. Swann's previous *Reference Notes For ASL* articles will know what to expect from "Airborne Samurai", in which Steve takes a look at Japanese paratroopers. The limited activities of these forces mean that the article is somewhat brief, but it is none-the-less informative and of much use for potential DYO scenarios. A couple of scenarios featuring Japanese paratroopers also accompany the article.

Reading an *Annual Crossfire* article always reminds me of a military exercise where they talk their way through a battle. This time Mark Nixon and Robert Banozic cover "Defeat In Java". It's worth reading just for the way the two argue and counter-argue,

although having never played "Defeat In Java" I can't say how accurate their observations are.

The campaign game leaders variant is basically an update of the system that was originally introduced in *Squad Leader*. Although it has been expanded to cover all the nationalities in ASL it does not cover armour leaders (which were introduced in *Cross of Iron*). I rarely used campaign leaders in *Squad Leader* and never thought of using them in ASL, so it's not of much use for me. None-the-less it's a well written piece.

Reading the Normandy articles show how late the annual is, as they are a celebration of the 1994 50th anniversary celebrations. But despite being a year late, they still make an interesting read. The primary article looks at the Normandy campaign and how it is reflected in the various scenarios. Some of these are GI and Rogue updates contained in the annual, and the second article looks at how they were updated and suggests various tactics for their play.

Most of the 24 scenarios in the annual have been seen before, in one form or another. Apart from the three updated Normandy scenarios, there are also a large number of scenarios taken from some of the ASL 'zines such as *Rout Report*, *Tactiques*, and *ASL News*. All look very good, and are not too rules intensive (although there is a D-Day beach assault and a night para-drop, and a couple of scenarios which feature snow).

The Gentle Art Of Routing deals with an all too common ASL occurrence. Following a review of the basic principles of routing, it offers advice on how to minimise effects of being Broken. Knowing this also allows you to take steps to maximise the effects on your opponent's units.

A series replay of Festung St. Edouard, one of the *Kampfgruppe Peiper* scenarios, brings the annual to a close. There's little you can say about a replay, but the use of full colour on the accompanying maps shows how much of an impression play of ASL can make when in full flow.

So, it is worth it? I'd have to say yes. Unlike the 93 annuals, this one has a lot of stuff that you'll keep going back to, even if just to read through. Too, much of it is

playable even by a relative beginner to the system. So, if this is what we can expect in the future, let's hope they can get the promised '95 (Fall) annual out this year.

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INTENSIVE FIRE '95

This is an ASL convention being held at the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham, near Swindon, from 3-5 November. It will cater for both friendly and competitive play. Entry will be about £5 for the weekend.

Accommodation will be available for £35 per night full board (in the Officer's Mess) or £15 per night for room only. As the event is being held on military property advance booking will be essential.

Anyone attending on the Friday will be able to visit the displays of small arms and AFVs which are not normally open to the public. Among the displays are a King Tiger and a fully working T34/85.

The initial reaction has been described as great, with people from as far away as America, Sweden, Portugal and Germany expressing an interest in attending. These include Phillipe Leonard, designer of *Kampfgruppe Peiper* and editor of *ASL News*, although this is subject to confirmation.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Neil Stevens (18 Bower Green, Longcot, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 7TU. CIS 100333,3652) for more details.

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INCOMING

According to Avalon Hill, "ASL is alive and well!". Based on their talk of new products, this could be more than just hype, although any talk of availability should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Of most interest is probably *Solitaire ASL*. This looks very similar to an idea I had for solo ASL, in that it features a series of missions in which the terrain and opposition are randomly determined (a bit like in *Ambush!*, from what I've seen of that game). It also features a campaign system, so that you can take a company through the entire war. It looks good, and will no doubt be very popular. My only concern is that the vast amount of dr/DR it requires will make it slow to play. But we'll see. It's already out in the States and should be available here within 4-6 weeks.

Three HASL modules are also in the works. *Kampfgruppe Peiper II* is the follow-up to *Kampfgruppe Peiper*, and covers the LaGleize and Cheneux area. *The Third Bridge* is a HASL developed by the American *The Rout Report* 'zine and is based around the struggle at Arnhem. *Mud and Blood* is a Pacific HASL developed by Steve Swann (he of the *Reference Notes for ASL* series of articles) and is based around the 7th Australian Division at Gona.

Two new mapboards, 42 (woods, with a small village and orchard) and 43 (farmland, with a villa and brush), are out now. Avalon Hill plan to release a set of scenarios which use these boards, and the set will also include the boards. Whether the scenarios will also be available on their own is not clear though, so I wouldn't rush out to buy them yet.

Beyond Squad Leader, the computer game based on *Squad Leader*, will be available for both PC (running under Windows) and Mac, but only on CD-ROM. No release date has been determined, and based on Avalon Hill's record with computer games (EG *PC Third Reich*), I wouldn't expect to see this until 1996 (at least).

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NON-COM - MUNICATION

Non-com: a non-commissioned officer (EG a Squad Leader).
Communication: to talk, exchange ideas and information.

GARY HEADLAND, HULL

It's great that a British ASL newsletter is on the scene seeing as our American friends at Avalon Hill appear to be in a right mess at the moment.

Have you heard any rumours from American gamers RE ASL, particularly solitaire systems?

Avalon Hill seem to have sorted themselves out a bit, and promise us a fair bit of ASL material in the coming months. See this issue's Incoming article for more details.

NICK BROWN, LEICESTER

Can you tell me anything about a SL scenario that has been shown in various *The General* back issue adverts from volumes 21 to 28? It is called "Death's Head At Lusho" and appears to feature SL Russians vs. GI Germans.

I'm afraid I can't help you there Nick. The advert first appears in volume 21 number 4, and I have most of the issues from that era, but it's not in any of them. If anyone can help identify this scenario, let me know and I'll pass the information on.

WILLIAM ROBERTS, WIMBORNE

Thanks for sending me a copy of *View From The Trenches*. I applaud your efforts to produce your magazine but think it is a tall order to match the ASL fanzines such as *ASL News*, *Critical Hit*, *Time On Target*, etc, which are professional periodicals and of extremely high quality. Take a look at the *Time On Target* Bulge scenarios - absolutely brilliant!

What is needed is an ASL newsletter to keep all players in touch with the scene and to promote FTF play by bringing players together in the UK.

Glad you like the 'zine William. For the moment at least the intention is indeed to

unite the ASL UK scene. Perhaps in the future I'll be able to compete with the quality of the major ASL 'zines. On the other hand, some of them come out somewhat irregularly, which is something I'm trying to avoid with View From The Trenches.

NEIL STEVENS, FARINGDON

Thank you very much for sending me issue #2 of *View From The Trenches*. I was very interested to see you are trying to get a British ASL newsletter off the ground. Out of small acorns...

"Out of small acorns..." indeed. From an initial circulation barely into double figures, I've now got over 50 people receiving the 'zine. I soon hope to see if I can get any mail order shops will send out a flyer with every ASL-related product.

ANDY DAGLISH, CHEADLE

Thank you for *View From The Trenches*. A British ASL magazine has been tried before, or at least thought of, though the last attempt folded when one went to Australia. I got caught by ASLUG, and whereas they cashed the cheque, nothing ever appeared.

Until View From The Trenches becomes established, I don't see the point in charging. At least if the 'zine folded I wouldn't owe anyone anything.

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FINAL FIRE

That's all for this issue. Hope you enjoyed it. Feel free to write and tell me what you think, or even contribute.

Issue 4 should be out in September.

VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES is an independant British ASL newsletter. It is available free on request (although an SAE is much appreciated). All correspondence should be sent to Pete Phillipps, 49 Lombardy Rise, Leicester, LE5 0FQ. CIS 100665,267